



SEN. JIM HARGROVE

Other successes

I have heard complaints that the Legislature didn't accomplish much this year, but I would argue that we addressed some very important issues. The Legislature passed 11 of the bills that I sponsored. The measures deal with a variety of topics, including:

- preventing the health risks associated with lead-based paint (SB 5586);
- testing shellfish for harmful biotoxins (SB 6073);
- sanctioning a connection between a foster family and the child's birth family (SB 5811); and
- giving Jefferson County the authority to establish a process for designating industrial land banks under the Growth Management Act (SB 5651).



REP. LYNN KESSLER

Economic development

Spurring economic development in our rural counties remained a top priority for me this session. The Legislature approved many measures aimed at improving the business climate across our state, but two bills, in particular, are targeted toward our local communities:

- I sponsored the Municipal Business and Occupational Tax Fairness Bill that will provide uniformity throughout the state. It keeps cities from collecting the B&O tax on business conducted in cities that don't charge that tax, simplifying paperwork and saving costs for small businesses. (HB 2030)
- Another bill I helped work through the House will give distressed rural counties a boost by consolidating the state's permitting process, and help potential investors get decisions on their permit requests in a timely manner. The idea for this bill came when a private business ran into problems securing permits to build a golf course. While the legislation streamlines the permitting process to help spur private investment, it doesn't weaken any existing environmental policies. (SB 5776)

24th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Legislative Wrap-up 2003

Summer 2003

Dear Neighbors,

There was nothing easy about being in Olympia this legislative session. Because the state's deficit grew to more than \$2.6 billion, we faced a tremendous challenge: cut deep or raise taxes.

The original Senate no-new-taxes budget, which Sen. Hargrove voted for, and the original House budget with new revenues, which Rep. Kessler voted for, may have appeared to be completely disparate approaches. In actuality, they were not radically different — there was only about a 2 percent difference between the two.


And in the end, we met right in the middle: The Senate agreed to boost its original budget level in additional spending, and the House agreed to cut its spending level. We passed a \$23 billion budget without raising taxes.

One of the reasons we have been so successful as legislators is because we have chosen to be problem-solvers instead of naysayers. When you're a problem-solver, you have to make tough decisions, such as whether to delay funding for popular citizen initiatives because the state simply doesn't have the money.

While we don't always agree on the solution, we work in good faith. We also both have great relationships with members of the other political party, which is essential to getting our work done.

We appreciate the opportunity to represent you. Please feel free to contact us if we can answer any questions or explain any issues.

Regards,


Sen. Jim Hargrove
State Senator


Rep. Lynn Kessler
State Representative

NEWSFLASH: Our last piece of business this session was passing an unemployment insurance reform bill and a tax incentive plan aimed at keeping the Boeing Co. here in Washington — where it belongs.



Sen. Jim Hargrove



Rep. Lynn Kessler

Please stay in touch

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Budget

As we mentioned earlier, the budget we agreed on in the end is a split-it-right-down-the-middle compromise between the original Senate and House budgets.

While it isn't perfect, it does not raise taxes. At the same time, it preserves vital state services that were drastically cut or eliminated in earlier versions of the budget.

- The number of enrollees on the state's Basic Health Plan, which offers low-cost health insurance to the working poor, is sustained at a

When our coffers recover from this tumultuous economy, we'll be able to invest more in our teachers and classrooms

reasonable level — and no one will be kicked off the plan.

- Medical assistance for 40,000 children in low-income families is maintained.
- Mothers who give birth to children



Sentencing reform and juvenile justice

While crime rates are flat — or, in the case of juveniles, falling — the cost of public safety continues to climb, consuming an ever-larger share of state and local government budgets.

In response to this, early on, the governor proposed a sentencing reform plan that would have saved the state money, but that we believe also would have put public safety in peril. Realizing that because of the grave budget situation this issue was not going to fall off the table this session, we decided to craft a more responsible solution that will also save a considerable amount of money.

The bill (SB 5990) slightly alters the length of some offenders' sentences and saves the state about \$50 million. It:

- Keeps the state's most-serious offenders in prison longer;

- Lets non-violent offenders out of jail two to four months earlier; and
- Allows us to continue our investment in programs to lower the state's crime rate by saving the state millions of dollars.

It passed both chambers with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The Legislature also focused on reducing costs of juvenile sentencing while reducing recidivism. Another bill (SB 5903) we worked on:

- Focuses retention of lower-risk offenders in community-based treatment;
- Provides a mental health sentencing option for juveniles whose treatment needs cannot be met at the state institutions and who can be successfully treated locally without increasing risks to public safety; and
- Provides for lower-level offenders a community commitment placement option that will combine county detention and community treatment.

It also passed with support from both sides of the aisle.

who will be U.S. citizens will continue to receive prenatal care.

- Developmental disabilities and mental health programs came out relatively unscathed.
- Funding for K-12 education actually increased, while most other areas of the budget saw significant decreases.
- Teachers in their first seven years in the classroom will receive raises.
- Home health care workers will also see a boost in pay.

Becca Bill

One of our biggest concerns was the fate of the "Becca Bill," which the governor chose not to fund in his budget. As you probably know, the Legislature adopted the measure several years ago to establish for at-risk and runaway youths new services intended to preserve their safety and help families reconcile.

We know that the Becca Bill is working — that because of it, at-risk children are staying in school and in their homes. As a result, the juvenile crime rate has been coming down for the past six years. That's why we fought so hard to make sure funding for the Becca Bill was included in the final budget. In the long run, it saves us money — and, more important, it saves lives.

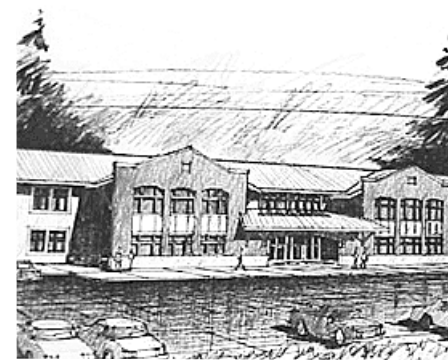
Education initiatives

The state's economic climate has changed dramatically since voters approved two initiatives that reduce class size (I-728) and automatically increase teachers' salaries (I-732). This session, because of our deficit, we had to make difficult choices. Do we fund the initiatives: a) with hundreds of millions of dollars in tax increases; or b) by making even deeper cuts to health care for women, children and other vulnerable citizens?

In the end, we did not repeal the measures; we delayed them. When our coffers recover from this tumultuous economy, we'll be able to invest more in our teachers and classrooms.

Skills center

We were able to find funds to continue construction on the North Olympic Peninsula Skills Center, which is set to open to students in September. This skills center, located at Eighth and "B" streets in Port Angeles, is a great investment in our district. Programs will be taught in



digital media technology, medicine, law and justice, building/construction, welding, education, culinary arts and hotel/tourism management. The school will help put people to work, improving the economic vitality of the Olympic Peninsula.

For more information about the skills center, go to www.pasd.wednet.edu/school/skc/index.html on the Internet.

Graving dock

One of the most controversial issues in our district this year was the Department of Transportation's decision to build a graving dock at the Port of Port Angeles. The onshore dry dock will be used to fabricate massive concrete pontoons and anchors for the eastern half of the Hood Canal bridge, which is expected to be installed in 2006.

We worked hard to make sure that the graving dock could still be used by the community after it has served its purpose.

Helping our military men and women

Military housing

Hundreds of soldiers, airmen, sailors and reservists stationed in Washington, and members of our state National Guard, received orders for deployment to the Persian Gulf and other destinations this year. Frequently these men and women have had only a few days notice before leaving their communities.

We both supported a bill that will ease the financial burden of rentals and leases for military personnel reassigned or deployed on an emergency basis. The measure allows waiver of the 20-day notice to terminate a rental agreement if there is less than 20 days before a reassignment or deployment takes place. Current law provides the exemption for military families living in manufactured housing or mobile homes. However, the provision does not

apply to apartment rentals, where a full-notice period is required. The new law covers members of the military as well as their spouses and dependents.

Shared leave

Along these same lines, we also supported a bill that would have allowed state employees to donate their sick leave to other state employees who have been called to active duty. Currently, state employees are entitled to only 15 days of paid military leave each year. The measure would have allowed state employees — who currently may donate leave time to critically ill or injured employees who have exhausted their leave — to donate sick leave to state workers who are called to duty. Unfortunately, the bill did not become law.

Prescription drugs

The cost of prescription drugs is rising at double-digit rates. Fortunately, this session, we were finally able to reach an agreement on how to make prescription drugs more affordable. We passed a bill that:

- Creates a state-purchasing consortium that will enable state agencies that purchase drugs to identify preferred drugs and negotiate lower prices with drug companies;

- Develops a discount program for the disabled and people 50 or older who have incomes of less than \$36,000 (for a family of two);
- Directs Medicaid to seek a federal waiver as a first step toward creating a Medicaid-subsidized prescription drug program;
- Creates a pharmacy connection program that will help low-income people obtain no-cost or low-cost drugs; and
- Requires the state's Area Agencies on Aging to develop programs to educate seniors about how to safely use prescriptions.

Some 200,000 people in Washington have no prescription drug coverage and meet the income and age guidelines for the discount program.

